



Greater Los Angeles Chapter *Japanese American Citizens League*

Newsletter no. 431

July 2021

MEETING and FAREWELL PARTY at Miyako's home Sunday, July 11, 2021

Business Meeting: 1:00 pm

Farewell Party for Janet Okubo: 2:00 pm Snack/Lunch

(address deleted)

Please RSVP Information and directions to Miyako's will be given then.

(contact information deleted)



Janet Okubo

Janet Okubo was GLA president from 2005 through 2020. She was her own recording secretary writing the minutes for the nearly monthly executive board meetings. Janet assumed the responsibilities of treasurer from 2014 through 2020. GLA appreciates Janet's gracious leadership for many years and assuming the duties of three positions.

Synonyms for Gracious: kind, courteous, pleasant, polite, civil, well-mannered, tactful, benevolent, diplomatic, considerate, thoughtful, and friendly. Janet was and is all of these.

(paragraph deleted)

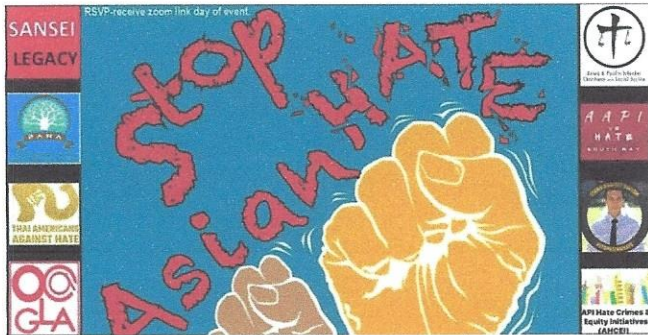
All the best of health and happiness to Janet in the next chapter of her life.

AUG 1, 2021. STOP ASIAN HATE 2 ZOOM EVENT Organized by Mitchell Matsumura and others
Stop Asian Hate and Violence

August 1, 2021 at 11am

Register in advance for this meeting:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYuf--vqzwvHN0Gc2p8 IX4TxpWV-NbO eZ](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/zoom-link-day-of-event)



Speakers:

DEENA AND ISMAEL ILETO. Family to Joseph Iletto. Filipino American postal worker Joseph Iletto was shot and killed by a white supremacist, shortly after he shot five people at a Jewish community center in Los Angeles in 1999.



SANDY ROXAS hate crime attorney in Torrance CA. Lawyer for victims of Lena Hernandez Anti-Asian attacks in 2020. She is with Roxas Law APC.

DIANE UJIIYE. Event moderator - AAPI Christians for Social Justice / Asian American Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AA-NHPI Voice)

—Hosted by—

- AAPI VS HATE South Bay
- AAPI Christians for Social Justice
- API Hate Crimes & Equity Initiatives (AHCEI)
- Greater LA JACL
- Progressive Asian Network for Action (PANA)
- Sansei Legacy
- South Bay Civic Breakfast Club
- Thai Americans Against Hate



Save Our Seniors Network asks for support of AB 279 bill to stop the evictions at Sakura ICF senior home in Boyle Heights

Come to two locations to sign letters to your CA State Senator to approve AB 279.

July 3 Saturday 12noon - 5pm at Frances Hashimoto Plaza in Little Tokyo. 50 yards south of traffic light street crossing on 2nd St. between San Pedro St. and Central Ave.

July 4 Sunday 1130am - 2pm at Faith UMC Church parking lot. 2115 W 182nd St Torrance, CA 90504.

Addressing a statewide crisis, AB 279 prohibits intermediate care and skilled nursing facilities, except in the case of bankruptcy, from transferring, terminating, or significantly changing residential care services during the emergency period. On June 23, a 10-0 bipartisan vote in the Senate Committee on Health confirmed the urgency and necessity of this legislation's advance. We anticipate the bill will be voted on the CA Senate floor in the days ahead.

Sponsored by Assemblymembers Al Muratsuchi and Miguel Santiago, AB 279 is the legislation to stop evictions from and downgrading of services at CA senior care facilities during the still ongoing pandemic.

For more information email: saveourseniors@progressiveasians.org

Organized by Mitchell Matsumura and others

Yo! Media

New Nikkei community magazine

Stories, food, culture

Website: itsyozine.com

First issue: April 2020

One of six editors: Craig Ishii, former JACL Pacific Southwest District governor

Article by Kurt Ikeda (GLA's scholarship recipient in 2009, co-president 2017-2018)

in Yo! Media's THE GREAT OUTDOORS Issue 21, June 2021

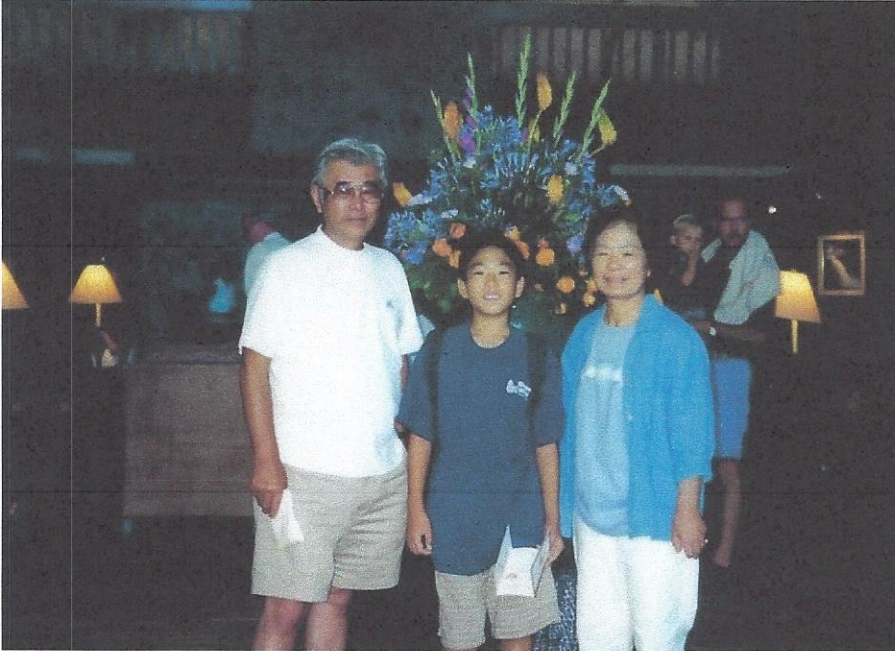
MY JOURNEY TO MINIDOKA

Park Ranger Kurt Ikeda shares his love of national parks and the legacy he carries on at Minidoka as a Japanese American.

Photo Credit: National Park Service

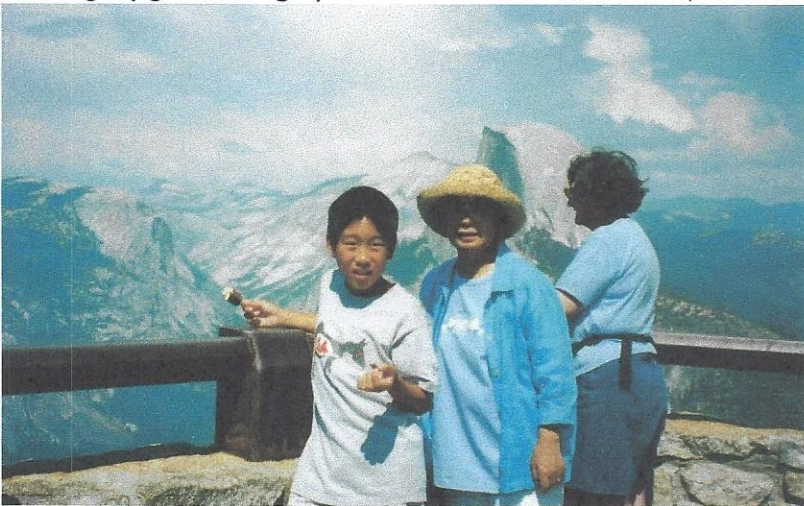
Yo-se-mi-te ヨセミテ

For my 10th birthday, my grandfather declared that our family would visit Yosemite National Park. It was to be my first visit to a national park, and he really talked up "Yo-se-mi-te." We weren't much of a road trip family, and we really weren't much of a nature exploring family either. So, we booked a stay at the park lodge and I packed my trusty Game Boy.



Kurt with his grandparents at Yosemite National Park, 2001

As we drove towards the Sierra Nevada mountains, I marveled at the giant sequoia trees out of the car window. We hiked, mountain biked, and took in the "dai-shizen" (great nature) that inspired the establishment of the National Park System. You might think this was the moment, with Half Dome in the distance, that I declared, "I want to grow up and be a park ranger." On the drive back, my grandfather asked me what my favorite part about Yosemite was. I looked at him with deep conviction and answered, "Ted-san, I loved the hot chocolate at the lodge." It was a story that he continued to tell with joyful recollection with a side of sarcasm until he passed away in 2016. If he could see me now wearing my green and gray National Park Service uniform, I bet he wouldn't believe it himself.

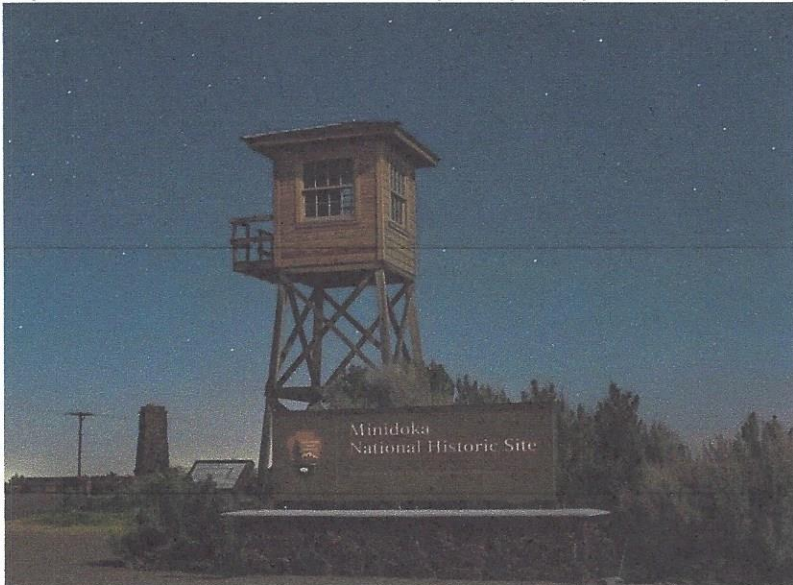


Kurt with his grandmother in front of Half Dome at Yosemite, 2001

In fact, a year, and a few months into working for the National Park Service, sometimes I don't believe it either. I don't outwardly express a park ranger lifestyle; in fact my first camping trip wasn't until my second year at UCLA. While the mountains weren't exactly calling me, I do remember as a young boy the careful love with which my grandfather had planned that big trip for us. Every stop highlighted; every map heavily creased. He loved what the national parks represented: "America's Best Idea," as environmentalist Wallace Stegner put it. Four years after that trip, I learned of other national park sites like Manzanar National Historic Site. I was puzzled at my grandfather's love of country probably as much as my obsession with Yosemite hot chocolate confused him.

Family trials to Minidoka trails

My father died when I was young, so growing up my grandfather was a major influence in my life. I was raised by a strong Shin-Issei immigrant mother in a very Japanese household. Growing up in the South Bay, the WWII incarceration experience was a shared narrative by many in my community.



Minidoka entrance and guard tower, photo credit: NPS / Stan Honda

Not having a "camp story" in my family's legacy made me feel excluded from the Nikkei narrative for most of my life. Ted-san was my grandfather through marriage but not by blood. And like many camp survivors, his trauma kept him from sharing much about his WWII experience until later in his life. During our Yosemite road trip, I asked my grandfather if he had also gone to Yosemite for his 10th birthday. Later I learned that he had spent his 10th birthday in Crystal City, Texas, waiting to be reunited with his Issei father.

The WWII incarceration of Japanese Americans was a period of history when over 120,000 people, two-thirds of them American citizens, were by Executive Order forcibly removed from their homes and placed in confinement sites without due process of law. Anti-Asian racism combined with tensions from the attack on Pearl Harbor caused the loyalty of Japanese Americans to be put into question. The government claimed that the incarceration was a military necessity, but a Congressional investigation over 30 years later found that it was motivated by "race prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership." Minidoka, in Idaho, is one of the 10 U.S. concentration camps where Japanese Americans from the West Coast were incarcerated. My choice to change careers from a high school English teacher to a park ranger at Minidoka National Historic Site was heavily influenced by my grandfather's incarceration.

February 19, 1935, 1942, 2017

Teruo “Ted” Okushiba was born on February 19, 1935. On my grandfather’s seventh birthday, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, which led to the forced removal of his family from Riverside, CA.



Kurt and his mother at the 2017 LA Day of Remembrance

On the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, I had the privilege of serving as co-emcee for the Los Angeles Day of Remembrance program alongside Kay Ouchi. While I had served in the JACL for a few years at that point, the 2017 D.O.R was my very first leap into education and activism surrounding the Nikkei experience. It was there I met many community leaders like Bruce Embrey, traci kato kiriyama, and Sean Miura. It was also during that first D.O.R planning meeting where I foolishly and naively asked, “why didn’t anyone resist internment?” Yup, I clearly had a lot to learn. Four years later, I study the actions of Nisei resisters like Minoru Yasui and Mitsue Endo and recognize that I still have a lot of room to grow.

A Note on Terminology

During my time at UCLA, I studied how the words we use to describe history can shape our experiences and memory. This concept rings true for terminology used to describe the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans during World War II. It is important to accurately tell this history without perpetuating euphemistic or incorrect terms that do not adequately describe the injustice faced by the community.



Photo of the Minidoka NHS Visitor Center, Photo credit: NPS

Earlier this year, the National Park Service made a commitment to strive for historical and academic accuracy by introducing guidance on using accurate terminology to interpret the incarceration.

While the U.S. Government and others employed euphemisms like “evacuation” and “relocation” during WWII, visitors to Minidoka National Historic Site will see more accurate terminology being used like “forced removal” and “incarceration”.

Visiting Minidoka National Historic Site

Driving into Minidoka National Historic Site today, visitors will be greeted by a historic military police station, a replica guard tower, and a replica Honor Roll across the street. This juxtaposition of symbols of incarceration and a symbol commemorating the valor and sacrifice of the Nisei soldier sets the tone for the visitor experience. Those entering our new visitor center will be greeted with a profound quote from camp survivor, Dr. Frank Kitamoto of Bainbridge Island. It reads: “This is not just a Japanese American story, but an American story with implications for the world.”

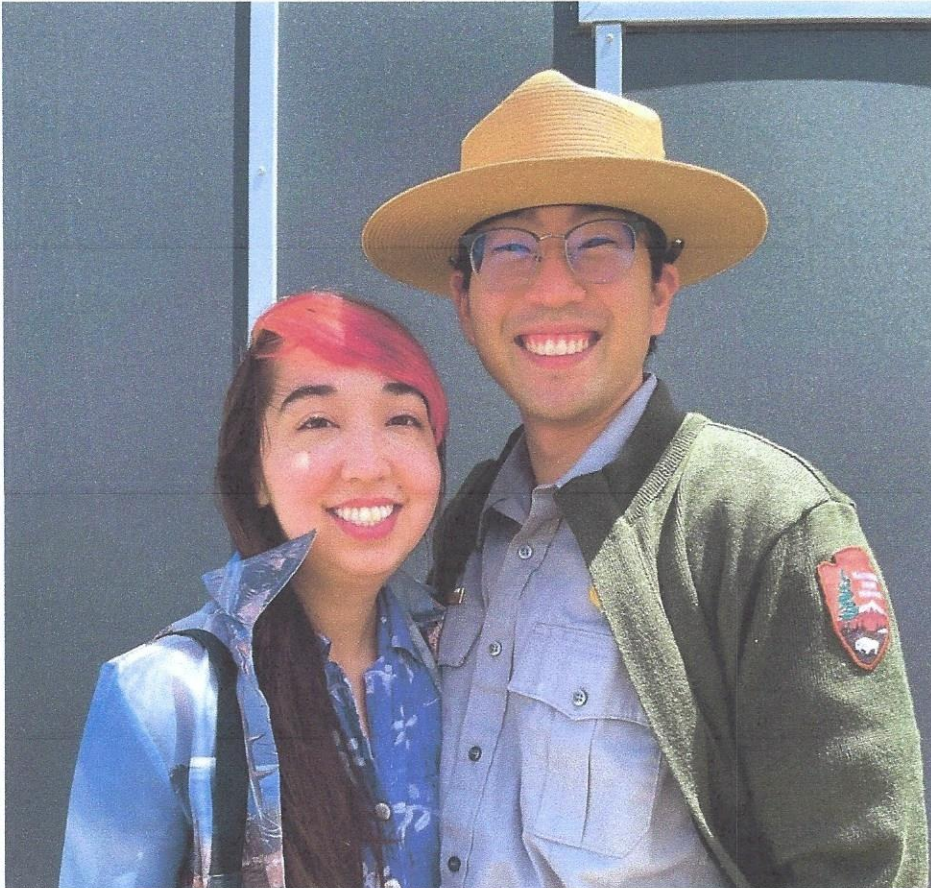


Former Chief of Interpretation Hanako Wakatsuki and Kurt inside the Minidoka NHS Visitor Center

The experiences of over 13,000 Japanese Americans at Minidoka are interpreted through the museum exhibits and an award-winning park film in the visitor center. Park rangers provide tours of the historic buildings including a barrack, mess hall, and fire station. While little is left of the camp’s over 600 buildings, the legacy of Japanese American farm

labor can be seen in the lush farmland surrounding Minidoka. In early July, the annual camp pilgrimage to Minidoka brings the site back to life as survivors, descendants, allies, and local community members gather to remember this tragic history and reclaim space.

I honor this work as a descendant of the camps and a child of immigrants. I aim to continue the standard of excellence set by my mentors before me. I face every day looking behind to the survivors who bravely share their stories and looking forward to the youth who will continue to carry their legacies forward. I am proud to be a Japanese American park ranger.



April and Kurt Ikeda at the Minidoka NHS Visitor Center

KURT IKEDA